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## WOMEN'S INVASION OF INDUSTRY AND CHANGES IN PROTECTIVE STANDARDS

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WHEN the program makers assigned as my subject, "Women's Invasion of Industry and Changes in Protective Standards," I take it that they had in mind no real invasion of industry, because I do not imagine that they think, as perhaps some people do, that women have just begun to work during this war. I take it that what they had in mind was a discussion of the new occupations for women, and the changes that have taken place during the war in our attitude toward women's work.

The new occupations for women, of course, are patent to anyone. Familiar illustrations occur to one—elevator attendants, ticket sellers, workers on the railroads and the street cars, and in a great many other employments which have captured the public imagination. But, after all, it is not the list of the new occupations of women, which is the important thing here. The important thing is the changed attitude toward the work which women can do. The public has shown a keen interest in hearing of women in some new occupation. That is a distinct change since before the war. Before the war employers and school boards and the general public took it for granted that the world was divided into woman's work and man's work, and women were expected to confine themselves to their accustomed tasks. But during the war it became a matter of patriotism for women to enter new occupations, and for employers to release men for the war by employing women for as much of their work as possible. This change in attitude is of far-reaching importance. It has both its assets and its liabilities. If it means the opening up of new opportunities, that is always an asset. If it means a changed attitude which will encourage the women themselves to think more highly of themselves than was possible when the whole world told them that there were certain

things which women could do and certain things which women could not do, it is an asset. But, if on the other hand it is made the occasion for the use of women without sufficient protection against exploitation, then it may become a real menace to the industrial standards of this country.

The first important consideration is the change in attitude not only toward the work which women can do, but toward the importance of standards. Before the war you might almost say that interest in protecting standards of employment, including hours and wages and working conditions, was confined to its advocates in the labor movement, and to a few social reformers. Of course employers took an interest in standards, but generally speaking the movement for changing conditions, especially through labor legislation, had only a limited group of advocates and their case was not generally thought to rest upon the argument for industrial efficiency. Before we entered the war we were being told that England had discovered that the production of shells was dependent upon the standards of work established, and that long hours of work, seven-day labor and night work, inadequate transportation facilities, and the lack of a hot meal at noon, and a great many other things which were once deplored for their effects upon health and social welfare, were equally disastrous in their effects upon the production of shells. So, when we entered the war we already had heard a great deal about the necessity for maintaining standards if we were to handle successfully our program of production. We have had therefore during the war statements from several official sources of what the standards should be.

For example, shortly after our entrance into the war the Chief of Ordnance and the Quartermaster General issued simultaneously a statement which defined eight hours as the basic working day, and 48 hours as the basic working week and declared that night work for women was undesirable; that the minimum wage rate should have a fair relation to the cost of living and should be adjusted from time to time to meet changes in the cost of living; and that there should be channels of communication making possible negotiations between employers and groups of employees. These were the chief points in these standards, stated first of all by the military departments of the Government, responsible for production for the war.

Then similar standards were issued by the Committee on Women in Industry of the Advisory Commission of the Council of National Defense, and by the Woman's Committee of the Council of National Defense, and recently they have been put forward, in substantially similar form, by the Woman in Industry Service, acting for the Secretary of Labor, with the endorsement of the War Labor Policies Board, as part of a reconstruction program. Thus, official backing for standards of working conditions is unequivocal.

You are familiar also with the report which led to the formation of the War Labor Board. That report, formulated by the War Labor Board's predecessor, the War Labor Conference Board, reaffirmed the necessity for the basic eight-hour day, a living wage as the basis for wages, equal pay for equal work for women and men, and the right to organize for collective bargaining. That pronouncement, confirmed by the President, was the official policy upon which the entire work of the War Labor Administration was based.

The enforcement of these standards and policies during the war was based upon the power of the federal government to require its contractors to comply with them. When the War Labor Policies Board was organized in the spring of 1918 there was for the first time a center of action for all of the production departments of the government, making possible the insertion in the contracts of uniform provisions relating to labor conditions. If the war had gone on, the indications were that these provisions would have been more and more comprehensive. For instance, in July, shortly after the organization of the War Labor Policies Board, the Federal Child Labor Law which had been declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court was written into the contracts of all the contracting departments of the Government. At about the same time the War Labor Policies Board recommended the writing into the contracts of a provision requiring full compliance with state labor laws in carrying out the contracts. That was necessary because some doubt had arisen as to whether the state labor law applied to plants working on contract for the Federal Government and practically controlled by it. In order that there might be no doubt on that subject this provision was written into the contracts.

On October 10 it was decided by the War Labor Policies Board to write into the contracts other provisions to safeguard women workers—the eight-hour day and the forty-eight hour week, with certain exceptions, which were limited, however, strictly to the war needs; and the principle of equal pay for equal work. These provisions, which had previously been pronouncements and recommendations, but not either contractual obligations or statutes with legal force, would thus have become enforceable through the contracts. But the end of the war changed the relation of the federal government to industry, especially with the curtailment of the contracts which followed.

So, the present position of protective standards for women in industry is that we have had authority and support for them in high places during the critical period of the war. We have not however had uniform enforcement of those standards even in the war industries, and we face the readjustment period with knowledge of the fact that the control of the federal government through its contracts is being curtailed, and we are forced therefore to the position where state labor legislation becomes the chief agency through which we must establish such standards as are proper subjects for labor legislation.

As to wages, during the war we have not had a satisfactory enforcement of the provision of the same pay for the same work, for women as for men. The fact that this principle, so explicitly affirmed, has been so inadequately enforced, must be remembered in facing the problems of readjustment. We have the wage problem ahead of us as the most fundamental, the most far-reaching problem of industrial adjustment, and the wage problem of women presents peculiar difficulties. The possible competition of women is perhaps the most important factor to be considered now in the wage problem of men. Miss Dreier has referred to the War Labor Board's award in Cleveland. We have there an award by a board established to adjust industrial disputes during the war, committed to the principle of the right of women to equal pay for equal work, but having no woman member, and that board in which the women were not represented, acting on a dispute between the company and the men's union, instructs a company to dismiss its women workers.

The competition of women who are without representation

in such councils of adjustment is a danger which cannot be ended by their dismissal from their occupation. If there is one lesson that we have learned during the war which can be carried over into peace times, it is the necessity for agencies of adjustment and of negotiation in which workers, employers, and the public interest shall all be represented, and it is clear that the interests of women workers cannot in fairness or wisdom be excluded or ignored.

We must of course agree that women workers are not to be considered a group apart, for they are part of the labor problem as workers and not as women. Nevertheless we know that women as a group in industry encounter certain peculiar difficulties, and those peculiar difficulties must be dealt with by adequate attention to the special problems of women. Unless the special problems of women receive attention, unless their interests are recognized in the reconstruction period and unless they are represented in the negotiations which are necessary in labor adjustment, all sorts of conflicts will become inevitable. We of course realize that there has been released in the world a new spirit of liberal thinking, a new democratic spirit. It will have its opposition, it already has encountered great opposition, but it cannot be destroyed, and the economic position of women is one of the subjects with which that liberal spirit will concern itself. Just because women have lacked economic power, their position in industry is a subject requiring the utmost skill and wisdom in labor reconstruction.

In the interest of reconstruction, standards for women in industry must be established by the further development of agencies of government acting through state labor laws, and through agencies of voluntary conference and negotiation, that is to say, through the participation of women in the trade-union movement.

It is important also that educational authorities should recognize the necessity for adequate training for women workers. That a remarkable record has been made by women in industry during the war is indicated in the reports which were published by such an organization as the National Industrial Conference Board, for instance, representing large groups of manufacturers. These reports have described repeated instances of greater output by women workers, than by the men

whose places they took. When you realize that this greater output was attained by women who without experience took the places of experienced men, you realize what the possibilities may be ahead if we free the energies and the powers of women for the work which they are proving themselves able to do. But, one thing we must recognize, and that is that although it has been possible for women to achieve remarkable results by taking the places of men in an emergency, we must not be content with that kind of emergency entrance into industry, that kind of splitting up of jobs into specialists' jobs, but we must build a solid foundation of adequate training. If women have proved that they can operate drill presses and lathe machines, is it not time to give women training in mechanics, training which shall develop greater skill than is required for the mere operation of a single machine? If they prove that they can rise to the war emergency, is it not for the best interests of the country that we give them a chance to prove what they can accomplish if given a real foundation for their work?

During the war we recognized that the work of women was essential to production for the war. It is no less true that the work of women is essential for production in peace times, when large output is necessary not for selfish interests, but for the upbuilding of all the nations after the destructive effects of the war. The production problem therefore becomes a social problem for the good of the nation, and the conservation of the health and energies of women workers becomes an important part of the program of labor reconstruction which will make satisfactory production possible.

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